

IN THE SPECIFICATION

Please amend paragraph [0001] of the application as follows:

[0001] The invention concerns a ring binder mechanism with a housing having a C-shaped or U-shaped cross-section, with elastic mounting flanks which can be bent open for receiving two carrier rails, which on their facing longitudinal edges lie against each other with formation of a linkage axis, and which with their away-facing longitudinal edges engage in mounting grooves of the mounting flanks, and with at least two half-rings rigidly connected with the carrier rail in a defined longitudinal separation from each other, extending through openings in a housing wall and forming themselves pairwise into a ring, wherein the carrier rails are limitedly pivotable relative to each other about the longitudinal pivot axis between an open position and a closed position, while overcoming the spring force produced by the bending open of the mounting shanks, and while taking along the half-rings, and wherein at least one blocking element is provided displaceable or moveable relative to the housing essentially parallel to longitudinal pivot axis and to the carrier rails via an operating element, which blocking element when in the closed position engages in a free space formed between the carrier rails and the housing wall thereby blocking the pivot movement, and when in the open position releases the linkage axis to pivot.

Please amend paragraph [0006] of the application as follows:

[0006] It is herein particularly advantageous, when the at least one blocking element

- is slideable or moveable in the open direction via the operating mechanism against the force of the blocking springs and is thereby unlockable,
- lies in the open position under the influence of the blocking spring against an opening detent,
- is releaseable out of the opening detent into the closing direction via the operating element against the force of the closing spring,
- is automatically lockable in the locking direction under the influence of the pre-tensioned blocking spring,
- is slideable or moveable in the locking direction directly by operation of the half-rings or indirectly via the carrier rails against the force of the blocking spring and thereby is releaseable from the opening detent.

Please amend paragraph [0014] of the application as follows:

[0014] According to a further advantageous embodiment of the invention the at least one blocking element is rigidly provided on a control rod, preferably formed as a pull-rod, wherein the push rod is limitedly slideable or moveable relative to the housing via the operating lever under the influence of the blocking spring in the longitudinal direction of the carrier rails. The blocking spring is thereby preferably formed as a pressure spring. In accordance therewith the operating lever is

provided on one end of the push rod, while the blocking spring is tensioned between the other end of the push rod and a housing fixed abutment, so that the operating lever in the opening direction pulls on the push rod against the force of the blocking spring.

Please amend paragraph [0020] of the application as follows:

[0020] In addition there is provided at least one slideable or moveable blocking element 32, 32', which via the operating lever 18 is slideable or moveable relative to the housing 10 essentially parallel to the linkage axis 22 and to the carrier rails 20, which when in the closed position engages in a free space 34 formed between the carrier rails 20 and the housing wall 13 with blockage of the pivot path of the carrier rails, and which when in the open position does not impede the pivot path about the linkage axis 22. A peculiarity of the shown construction is comprised therein, that at least one blocking element 32 is pre-tensioned, under the influence of at least one blocking spring 36, 36', in the direction of the locking position (Fig. 6a through c and Fig. 14a through e). The at least one blocking element 32, 32' is slideable or moveable into the open position via the operating lever 18 against the force of the blocking spring 36', 36', and thereby unlockable (Fig. 8a and c; Fig. 14b and c). In the open position the at least one blocking element 32, 32' lies under the influence of the blocking spring 36, 36' against an opening detent (Fig. 8d; Fig. 14d). From the open position the at least one blocking element 32, 32' can be released from the open detent 38 either via the

operating lever 18 or else by pressing together of the half-rings 16 against the force of the blocking spring (Fig. 8e, Fig. 14e), so that it is pushed automatically into the free space 34 in the course of further closing under the influence of the pre-tensioned blocking spring 36, 36' and locks the carrier rails 20 in their closed position. The operating lever 18 further includes an opening arm or cantilever 40 which abuts against the carrier rails in the opening direction and pivots these from the closed into the open position while overcoming the spring force produced by the housing flanks 28. Further, the operating lever 18 is provided with a closing arm or cantilever 42 which abuts against the carrier rails 20 in the closed position and which pivots these from their open into the closed position while overcoming the spring force applied by the housing flanks 28. It is in principle possible, that the at least one blocking element 32, 32' is slideable or moveable against the force of the closing spring 36, 36' into the closed position also directly by operation of the half-rings 16, or indirectly via the carrier rails 20, and thereby is disengagable from the open detent 38.

Please amend paragraph [0031] of the application as follows:

[0031] The ring binder mechanism includes two half-ring pairs 16 extending through openings 12 in the housing wall 13 and provided a defined separation from each other, which are not mirror symmetric and which together produce unround rings 14. This ring binder mechanism replaces the otherwise conventional lever mechanism of a letter file. In accordance therewith, an

operating lever is employed for opening and closing the rings 14, which lever is provided in the intermediate area between the two rings, of which the operating arm 18' extends through the loop of one of the rings 14. A particularity of this embodiment is comprised therein, that the blocking element 32 is provided on a lever arm 100 rigidly connected with the operating lever 18 and that the operating lever 18 together with the blocking element 32 is limitedly displaceable or moveable relative to the housing 10 and the carrier rails 20. The lever arm 100 of the blocking element extends through a wall opening 116 of the housing, while the housing-fixed detent 110 is formed by a preferably curved border edge of the wall opening. The blocking spring 36, formed as a leg spring in the shown embodiment, is mounted under tension with one leg 48 against one lever-fixed abutment 102 and with its other leg 50 against a housing-fixed abutment 104. The operating lever includes a control curve 108 which is guided on a control edge 106 of the housing 10, over which the operating lever 18 and its blocking element 32 are slideable or moveable during pivoting from a closed position in the direction of the open position against the force of the closing spring 36 (see Fig. 14a and b). The control curve 108 is provided on a control arm 120 extending through the wall opening 116 of the housing 10 and through hole 118 in the abutment area between the carrier rails 20, while the control edge 106 is preferably formed by a curved boundary edge of the wall opening 116. Further, in this case also the operating lever 18 is connected rigidly with an opening arm 40 acting in the opening direction against the carrier rails, which opening

arm in this case is formed by two pins projecting towards opposite sides. The opening arm 40 is provided such a distance from the blocking element 32, that in the closed position of the operating lever 18 the blocking element is introducible into the free space 34 between the carrier rails 20 and the housing wall 13 and the under the influence of the closing spring 36, and in the open position abuts, under the influence of the closing spring 36, against a housing-fixed detent 110. The blocking element 32 or the lever arm 100 thereof is, in this case, at the same time also formed as a closing arm 42, acting in the closing direction against the carrier rails 20. In the closed position the blocking element 32 lies against a housing-fixed end abutment 122, which is wedge-shaped in the direction of closing and is formed by a bowing of the housing wall 13 projecting into the free space 32.

Please amend paragraph [0039] of the application as follows:

[0039] In summary the following can be concluded: The invention concerns a ring binder mechanism for receiving of loose written materials. The ring binder mechanism includes a housing 10 with spring-elastic bendable housing flanks 28. In the housing are two carrier rails 20, which are pivotable with respect to each other in the manner of a knee-lever in the area of their facing or contacting longitudinal edges under the spring effect of the housing flanks 28. At least two longitudinally spaced-apart half-rings 16, which with complementary half-rings pairwise form a ring 14, are rigidly connected with the carrier rails 20. Further, at least one

blocking element 32 slideable or moveable relative to the housing 10 via an operating mechanism 18 essentially parallel to the linkage axis 22 and to the carrier rails 20, which in the closed position protrudes into a free space 34 formed between the carrier rails 20 and the housing wall 13 with blocking of the pivot movement of the carrier rails 20, and which in the open position frees the pivot path about the linkage axis 22. It is proposed in accordance with the invention, that the at least one blocking element 32 is pre-tensioned in the direction of the closed position under the influence of a closing spring 36.